



State of Connecticut

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES STATE CAPITOL

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Testimony On HB 6456, An Act Establishing a Learn Here, Live Here Program Commerce Committee Public Hearing March 1, 2011

Senator LeBeau, Representative Berger, Senator Frantz, Representative Camillo, distinguished members of the Commerce Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of HB 6456, An Act Establishing a Learn Here, Live Here Program.

I support this bill because I believe it effectively addresses a number of issues, either directly or indirectly. They include the difficulties faced by first-time wage-earners in purchasing homes; the exodus from the state of educated young people; the revitalization of urban settings; the preservation of Connecticut's highly competitive educated workforce; and the difficulties families have staying together in our current context. The bill also promotes college education at a time when it is taking many students longer to finish their degrees in our state system, and these delays, along with increasing costs, are discouraging many from continuing until the end.

I believe that all of these issues need to be addressed to ensure that Connecticut remains competitive as a place to live, work, raise a family, and do business. As most of you probably know from discussions of similar versions of this bill in previous sessions, Connecticut is aging fast, and at the same time has lost thousands of recent graduates over the past decade. This means that we are spending time, money, and effort on educating a workforce for other states. This bill could help to change that.

My support of this bill is strengthened by recent personal experience. Beginning in September 2008, I taught juniors and seniors at UConn over the course of six academic terms. In my classes, we often discussed what the students were going to do after graduation, and many of them came to me to discuss their career plans. A very high proportion of the students in every class said that they either could not stay in Connecticut, or that if they did, they would have to move in with their parents. The others either planned to go to graduate school or were leaving the state. There seemed to be few, if any, affordable housing options for them in Connecticut.

When this bill was heard in the Higher Education committee in 2008, there was a question about the taxes on the income earned by recent graduates that the state would lose through this program. I think it's reasonable to consider that the state might well lose them without the program, if those graduates were to leave and work elsewhere. And this program would help us to build our competitive workforce for the future.

I thank you for your consideration of this bill, and I respectfully urge the members of the committee to support it.

Sincerely,

Gail Lavielle
State Representative
143rd District